

11/14/11

New Hampshire's First State House Project
Public Meetings
November 2011

Based on what you heard this evening, please share your thoughts on the following questions:

1. What do you find interesting about New Hampshire's First State House?

I didn't know much about it, but find it interesting that it still captures so much attention. Since it was so radically changed (to boarding house) I think the idea that people did not value it as a symbol of anything is interesting too.

2. How do you currently envision New Hampshire's First State House Project and its final outcome?

- ① resolving people's concern that it is an important object being "wasted"
- ② I like the idea of using it for education (the lab) and virtual resource

3. What benefit(s) for New Hampshire citizens do you hope to see result from the interpretation of New Hampshire's First State House?

see above. What I don't think is a good idea is diverting too many resources (\$, time etc.) away from our other historic houses & resources. If it can augment an extant institution, that's best.

Please leave comments in the box or mail to:

NH's First State House Project
NH Division of Historical Resources
19 Pillsbury Street
Concord, NH 03301

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Based on what you heard this evening, please share your thoughts on the following questions:

1. What do you find interesting about New Hampshire's First State House?

It still exists and can be touched + looked at. Lots of research exists to document its structure + use.

2. How do you currently envision New Hampshire's First State House Project and its final outcome?

- Public - private partnership like Louis de Rechemont house in Newington - perhaps a law firm - lots of lawyers in original State House.
- a private entity reconstructs the building according to your best analysis of its structure.
- private entity pays maintenance/repairs
- public provides site location, historical context
- covenants in deed detail the rights/when of public access to certain historical aspects of the building.

3. What benefit(s) for New Hampshire citizens do you hope to see result from the interpretation of New Hampshire's First State House?

- best context is an actual use that citizens need
- e.g. replace Children's Museum in downtown Portsmouth
- Does Portsmouth need an after-school program that is not sports or music related for students to learn civics?
- Elder care programs relating to history, Portsmouth listens, news + events

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Lucie Pickering
Newington

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Based on what you heard this evening, please share your thoughts on the following questions:

1. What do you find interesting about New Hampshire's First State House?

That it survived inspite of determined neglect

2. How do you currently envision New Hampshire's First State House Project and its final outcome?

*Rebuild what's left into a new Old State House
Use to intro Civic History*

3. What benefit(s) for New Hampshire citizens do you hope to see result from the interpretation of New Hampshire's First State House?

That we learn where we came from & how we got here

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Based on what you heard this evening, please share your thoughts on the following questions:

1. What do you find interesting about New Hampshire's First State House?

The potential use for the materials was most interesting.

The speech about economic impact was too long and too general.

2. How do you currently envision New Hampshire's First State House Project and its final outcome?

*Either a ^{colonial} government / ^{modern} civic education center or a
bed & breakfast are great ideas.*

3. What benefit(s) for New Hampshire citizens do you hope to see result from the interpretation of New Hampshire's First State House?

*a better appreciation for New Hampshire colonial history and
greater civic pride.*

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Based on what you heard this evening, please share your thoughts on the following questions:

1. What do you find interesting about New Hampshire's First State House?

Apart from the thematic subjects it can help to interpret, the State House is interesting as a chapter in the preservation history of New Hampshire. The building was first identified as a historical landmark in Sarah Foster's *Portsmouth Guidebook* of 1876. Its original appearance was depicted in the form of a composite photograph, as accurately as possible with information then available, in C. S. Gurney's book, *Portsmouth . . . Historic and Picturesque* in 1902. The building, as then understood, formed the basis for the design of the New Hampshire State Building at the Eastern States Exposition in West Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1930. It became the focal point of a preservation plan in a WPA study of Portsmouth's South End in 1935, and this plan formed the original concept for Strawberry Banke, Inc., in 1958. Efforts to acquire and move the building to Strawberry Banke were central to that museum's development of its "Area to Receive Historic Buildings from Without" during the 1960s, culminating in the purchase and moving of the building in 1969. Understanding the history of the building and planning for its possible future uses have been major efforts of the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources since 1987, when Chapter 364 of the New Hampshire Session Laws of 1987 placed the building in the custody of the division. The immense amount of thought and research that has been invested in this building makes its future disposition as an artifact a matter of serious responsibility.

2. How do you currently envision New Hampshire's First State House Project and its final outcome?

The outcome of the State House project became unpredictable during the 1980s when Strawberry Banke Museum changed its interpretive emphasis and ceased to be interested in the building except under terms that would have been financially advantageous to the museum. During the 1960s, the museum had campaigned persistently, and ultimately successfully, to have the structure purchased from private owners and moved from its Court Street site to the museum grounds for future rehabilitation. Until the 1980s, rehabilitation of the building as an administrative and interpretive focal point of the projected and partially assembled "State House Group" was central to the planning of Strawberry Banke. In the 1980s, however, the museum refocused its interpretive mission. At that point, Strawberry Banke's focus began to narrow from its original themes of "Portsmouth, the Piscataqua Region, and the State of New Hampshire" to concentrate more exclusively on the history of the Puddle Dock neighborhood.

The outcome of the project became still more uncertain in 1988. At that time, a bill that would have appropriated funds to restore the building as a museum depicting New Hampshire under royal government was declared inexpedient to legislate at the onset of an economic recession. From that time forward, the building, either as a standing structure or later as a collection of disassembled elements, has been a statutory responsibility of the DHR alone, with no institutional partner[s], except for the former "Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on the Old State House," to share in planning for its ultimate use, staffing, upkeep, or interpretation.

After more than twenty years of working with others to identify such a partner, I feel that no such entity is likely to appear in the foreseeable future. Therefore, I see the outcome of the State House project as twofold, and as very different from the outcome that might have been hoped for when Chapter 364 of the New Hampshire Session Laws of 1987 placed the building in the custody of the Division of Historical Resources: 1. as a catalyst for deepened understanding of New Hampshire's colonial history, at least through the research that has been amassed over the years and is stored in the files at DHR; and 2. as an incentive for the creation of a permanent place of storage for architectural artifact collections in New Hampshire. Some of these (including the State House) are listed in Emogene Bevitt's *Second Lives: A Survey of Architectural Artifact Collections in the United States* (National Park Service, 1994). If no physical use of the building elements is identified in the near future, then the next clear step will be to transfer these elements, and other architectural artifacts now in state government custody, to a place of safekeeping and study similar to (or merged with) DHR's Airport Road archaeological storage facility.

3. What benefit(s) for New Hampshire citizens do you hope to see result from the interpretation of New Hampshire's First State House?

1. A more accurate understanding of New Hampshire's history, governmental structure, and system of laws and courts prior to the Revolution; 2. possible integration of this understanding into a reinvigorated civics curriculum in New Hampshire, as envisioned by the New Hampshire Supreme Court Society (see *Concord Monitor*, August 3, 2009, September 13, 2009); 3. an image—physical, intellectual, or both—of the seat of government of New Hampshire from 1758 until the Revolution, to be derived from the concepts being developed by the Cherry Valley Group; 4. a collection of study elements available for research and for instruction of students in the Plymouth State University Preservation Studies Program and others.

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I think we should build a replica of the original State House and use the original timbers for certain sections. For instance, we could use some of the original beams as beams in the new building. An opening in the ceiling (possibly covered with glass or acrylic) would allow visitors to view the original beams. Original flooring could be used to make the floor of an entire room. A walkway could be constructed so that visitors are not walking on the original floor timbers. Original wall supports could be incorporated into a wall that is covered by clear glass or acrylic to show the construction technique. The use of original timbers could be restricted to one room of the building, allowing the remainder to be used for other purposes. I bet you could take up a collection or gets some corporate sponsors to build the replica. I know I would contribute.

Jim Burton
Nashua, NH

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: New Hampshire's First State House Project Suggestion

As a citizen of New Hampshire, I would like to see the remnants of New Hampshire's First State House be made into a piece of furniture for the Governor's office, constructed by a reputable/well-known New Hampshire craftsman. A desk for the Governor would be the ultimate; however, I am not sure that the current desk for the Governor has a special significance. If a desk is not a viable choice, than I suggest a piece of furniture that would hold great significance to our Governor's office or Statehouse.

Mrs. Joanne Martell
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